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SCHOOLSCAPES

WORKING TOGETHER
TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS

Reach for your **Dreams**

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Through Your Eyes

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COVER PAGE
Jean-Philippe, Vicky and Julien

By Francine Payette

The cover page of this issue shows the faces of three young people, whose eyes shine with their hopes and dreams. Jean-Philippe wants to become a scientist. Vicky has always dreamed of being a hairdresser and a photographer. Julien works as a nursing assistant and is about to start a DEC in Nursing. These are three of fifteen young people who agreed to talk about their experiences in preschool, elementary and secondary school. It is hard not to be moved by their earnestness and enthusiasm. The video of their testimonies, presented at the November provincial meeting on the education reform, can be downloaded in French from the *Virage* Web site.

As students' dreams begin to take concrete shape, it is teachers who provide the daily support to help these young people achieve their goals. On pages 3 and 4, researcher Chantale Beaucher talks about the importance of helping students find meaning in their learning so that they are able to realize their dreams. To do so, not only do teachers carry out stimulating projects with their students, but they participate in professional development sessions to reflect on their teaching practices.

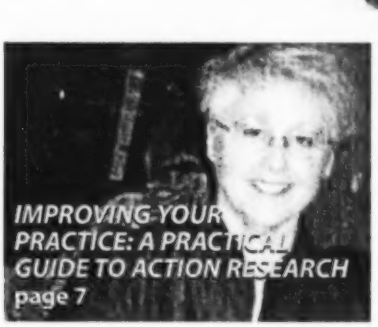
In the English sector, a record number of participants signed up for the Lead and Pilot Schools Conference hosted by the Implementation Design Committee in October. The theme for this one-day session was action research. Education specialist Luc Lépine presented some general guidelines for action research, while education consultant Barbara Tarrant offered a practical guide for carrying out an action research project in an elementary school classroom, with examples from her own experience. See pages 7 to 9.

We know from our *Schoolscapes* survey that you are particularly interested in evaluation. On pages 11 to 19, you will find articles about various tools currently being developed, including competency levels for the evaluation of the subject-specific competencies in secondary school, and a tool for adapting school and school board guidelines to the *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning*.

The entire *Schoolscapes* team wishes you many joys, big and small, for the holiday season and New Year.

Enjoy your reading!

Photo: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 2002-2004



EXCHANGING LEARNING

A meeting of the minds

By Pascale Sauvé

Tapping into Students' Aspirations to Engage Them in Learning

The situation is not always rosy for young people," said Chantale Beaucher, a guest speaker at the April provincial meeting on the education reform, where she had been invited to share her research findings and observations. "Students are often undecided at the end of secondary school," she continued. "Career choices are made by default, and many students switch programs in CEGEP or university. Many fail, abandon their studies or don't graduate right away. All these interruptions have an impact on the school system and on young people themselves. They lead to organizational and management problems, high social costs and, most importantly, negative effects on young people, who face social pressure from their families and organizations."

Why are so many students at a loss? "The situation is complex," says Beaucher. "Despite the evolution of knowledge in the education field, we still only have scraps of answers to this question. However, each scrap is essential because, pieced together, they help us understand what young people are going through, and this in turn helps us guide them in their development."

Beaucher's studies and observations led her to form the following hypothesis. "Perhaps part of the answer to this problem is that young people have trouble finding meaning in their studies. Perhaps what they find meaningful has little to do with what they experience in school. And perhaps their professional plans and aspirations could make school more meaningful to them."

Plans and dreams

Beaucher begins with the premise that when students know what they want to do in life, they are more interested in learning and therefore more involved at school. However, first they need to identify a goal. Then, they have to base their choices on a realistic view of the future, their studies, the profession in question and the job market. Finally, they have to come up with a strategy to achieve their goal and, most importantly, put it into action. "But," she explains, "when some of these elements are missing, deficient, fragmented, vague, unrealistic or based on stereotypes, it's not a plan, it's a dream. It remains a professional aspiration."

Most young people don't have a professional plan. Studies in Québec show that at least 75 per cent of students in Secondary Cycle Two have no idea what they want to do in life. "Some authors say that without a professional plan,

Beaucher begins with the premise that when students know what they want to do in life, they are more interested in learning and therefore more involved at school.

there's no salvation," said Beaucher "Indeed, young people have to formulate a plan in Secondary V to enroll in CEGEP or vocational education. Other authors say that, for human beings, not having a plan is the end of the world. I believe that there's an in-between zone: the embryo of a plan or just a spark of interest. That's what I call a professional aspiration."

Creating meaning

Beaucher wanted to find out if there was a way, in the absence of a concrete professional plan, to focus on something else to get young people interested in learning and school. Could an aspiration be a source of inspiration? Could it help give meaning to learning, despite its imprecise nature?

After meeting with a number of young people in Secondary Cycle Two, she identified four types of aspirations.

Utopian—closest to a dream; the ideas are fragmented, stereotypical or idealized; few steps are carried out to achieve the desired goal.

Realistic—closest to a professional plan; however, little action is taken to achieve the desired goal.

Submerged—short-term goal only; these young people are unable to choose between their many interests; they stick to the status quo out of fear of making a mistake.

Undefined—no goal; these young people have no idea what they want to do and are not doing anything to try to figure it out; they are very passive.

Beaucher then became interested in the concept of a person's relationship to knowledge. "This is the person's subjective and emotional connection to everything related to knowledge and learning," she explained. "It also reveals what learning means to that person." She identified four types of relationships to knowledge.

Enthusiastic—These students are very active and dynamic about learning; they recognize that knowledge enables them to evolve as human beings; what they do and learn at school is meaningful to them.

Confident—They think that learning is a springboard toward culture; they accumulate knowledge because they believe it will be useful "one day"; what they do in school is not necessarily meaningful to them, but they're confident that the adults around them know the meaning of what they're learning.

Paradoxical—They believe that knowledge enables them to behave according to the expectations of the school, their parents, their employers, society; they do only what is asked of them, but apply themselves thoroughly. Generally, they do not see the meaning of what they are learning.

Utilitarian—They see knowledge as a passport to the job market; they decide whether learning is useful according to a cost/benefit calculation; they do only what is necessary, nothing more; they do not necessarily understand the meaning of what they are learning, unless they can see an immediate and practical application.

By matching students' professional aspirations with their relationship to knowledge, Beaucher was able to paint a global picture. "Generally, young people who have a realistic or utopian professional goal are enthusiastic or confident about knowledge," she explained. "They are focused on learning and, to them, what they learn in school has meaning. They are generally active. On the other hand, young people with submerged or undefined professional aspirations have a more difficult time. The meaning of what they are learning is absent or vague, distant or inaccessible. Their relationship to knowledge is usually paradoxical and utilitarian."

Sources of inspiration

"Ultimately, what holds meaning for most young people is not what they learn at school or a future, hypothetical career," she concludes. "Rather, what holds meaning is the present moment, friends, love, music, sports, etc. I believe we're going down the wrong path by insisting, at all costs, that young people establish a professional plan. However, there is a lot to be gained from supporting them in their aspirations."

Because, for many young people, these aspirations make learning meaningful. "It's important to detect the little sparks of interest; these may be the beginnings of a plan," she added. "It is equally important not to forget about students who have named a professional goal. For this does not mean the case is closed. Young people need guidance in developing their aspirations and expanding their relationship to knowledge. The more we apply this attitude, the more meaningful learning will become to students, and the greater their chances of success along their chosen path."

"I believe we're going down the wrong path by insisting, at all costs, that young people establish a professional plan. However, there is a lot to be gained from supporting them in their aspirations."

By Pascale Sauvé

Working on a daily basis with young people who have had many failures or who drift about the school system before finding their way, Carole Viel has come to the conclusion that schools must adapt to young people's reality. To illustrate, she describes three young people who have followed tortuous paths. They represent thousands of others with similar experiences.

At 18, Marlene had dropped out of general youth education and, after several attempts, had abandoned her plan to finish her Secondary V in the adult education sector. She wanted to become a topography operator. However, she did not have the prerequisites to enroll in the program. After much reflection and hesitation, she decided to enroll instead in the Shoe and Repair program. She completed the program and worked for a while in two shoemaking and repair shops. But then she began to doubt her choice. So she decided to retrace her steps: she enrolled in adult education once again, taking a CEGEP program in orthotic and prosthesis techniques. After a long detour, she now knows she is on the right track.

Jean-Hugues was 21 when he came to see Viel. He had a Secondary School Diploma and had begun studying social sciences in CEGEP. His situation changed the day he had a child. At first he tried to continue his CEGEP studies, living on loans and bursaries. But he felt pressured by time and the need to provide his family with financial stability. So, he enrolled in Machining Techniques. Although he had some difficulty adapting, he finally completed his training and is now employed.

Carl was passionate about mathematics. But when he suffered a serious head injury and lost his capacity for abstract thinking, he was forced to completely rethink his career choices. He spent a lot of time discussing potential options with his parents. "I'm not sure where Carl is at now, but his path has not been easy," says Viel.

"Thousands of young people like Marlene, Jean-Hugues and Carl end up succeeding, but at what price?" she asks. "The emotional cost is high, their self-esteem is affected, they go into debt, and they are under constant pressure. This can be a very difficult situation."

The solutions? According to Viel, there are several ways to improve the situation and make things easier for young people: diversify learning paths, create bridges between the different paths, and provide more academic and professional information and guidance in schools.

Photo: François Nadeau

Working on a daily basis with young people who have had many failures or who drift about the school system before finding their way, Carole Viel has come to the conclusion that schools must adapt to young people's reality.

By Pascale Sauvé

Social Sciences

The Social Sciences workshop team is offering a series of three professional development sessions in regions across Québec. In these sessions, participants delve further into the Québec Education Program for Secondary Cycle One, develop a common representation of the Social Sciences subject area, explore each of the subjects within it, compose a learning situation and explore evaluation issues.

Key changes

What are the key changes, highlights and new elements in the Social Sciences program for Secondary Cycle One? "The biggest change for teachers will be to work with a new, concept-oriented approach," says Danielle Dumas, workshop leader. "They will have to help students develop concepts rather than learn definitions. That is a major difference."

"Although this is first and foremost a pedagogical reform, the very essence of the programs is different," adds Marie-Noëlle Soumeillant, another workshop leader. "For example, for years we taught physical, human and economic geography in separate units, without making connections between them. From now on, we have to adopt a much more holistic view: the new approach is based on the concepts of territory and society. Until now, we simply taught space and its main characteristics. Now we have to look at how a society, with its culture, needs and identity, uses space and territory. It's an entirely new perspective."

The same is true of History and Citizenship Education. While the content remains more or less the same, the pedagogical approach is entirely different. "With the introduction of competencies, we no longer look at societies in the same way," says workshop leader Pierre Laperrière. "Before, we wanted students to learn what had happened at a given time in a given place. Now, we want them to discover how these great moments of the past have shaped history. We want students to understand the past so that they can make sense of current problems and face the future."

How does this new approach benefit students? "Our goal is not to turn all students into great historians or geographers, but to help them understand the world they live in and to develop their awareness as citizens," says Soumeillant.

"Students will find more meaning in what they're learning," adds Laperrière. "In the past, they ended up with all this cultural baggage that they hardly ever used. Now, they'll see the meaning of it and use it in their daily lives. They'll be like apprentice citizens, with a critical awareness, an ability to organize information and a stronger identity."

To find out more, visit:
<**www.recitus.qc.ca**> and
<**www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/socialsciences**>.

By Eve Krakow

Lead and Pilot Schools Conference

In a workshop given at the Lead and Pilot Schools Conference, hosted by the Implementation Design Committee (IDC) on October 21 in Montreal, Tarrant presented a practical guide to conducting an action research project. She illustrated the process with examples from her own experience as a resource teacher in an elementary school classroom.

Tarrant began by dissecting this catch phrase into its two components: "Action" is the process of exploring better ways of acting, ways that may result in a better teaching situation for the teacher and a better learning situation for the students. "Research" is the systematic enquiry, the collection and analysis of data as evidence that the teacher's actions are effective.

"As teachers, we've always done this: we see a problem, so we look at ways to solve it," she said. "But we haven't systematically collected data, or planned how to collect data. That's the research aspect."

Drawing on the work of Emily Calhoun, Tarrant described the Action Research Funnel: to conduct action research, you "pour" internal information (your own on-site data) and external information (your findings from literature on the subject) into the decision-making and action process in order to obtain enhanced education for students.

Action Research Steps

Action research is a continuing cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. "It's a tool to help you better understand your educational practice and to make ongoing improvements," said Tarrant. In the workshop, she demystified the process by going through each step and giving participants a few minutes to work with colleagues at their tables to figure out how they could apply this model to a situation in their own school or classroom.

1. What is my research interest?

Describe a problem or critical incident—something that happened and that stands out because it was problematic, confusing, a great success or a terrible failure, or because it captures the essence of what you are trying to achieve. Give as much detail as possible, including relevant context.

Now, reframe the problem as a question: *"How can I...?"*

In Tarrant's case, she was interested in journaling. She was working with Grade 4 students who didn't write much, and her study of the literature on this problem had told her that having students keep journals would be helpful. So her students wrote in their journals three times a week, and she responded to what they were doing as writers, encouraging them to write well. She hoped that the students would gradually transfer their success in journaling to their crafted writing, i.e. their personal narratives and fiction. But it wasn't happening. The students' new writing skills remained caught between the covers of their journals.

So her question was: *"How can I help my students draw on the writing they have done in their journals to improve their crafted writing?"*

2. What will I try out in order to improve my practice?

This is your action plan. "Brainstorm some strategies with a critical friend," said Tarrant. "Then determine whether these ideas are reasonable and manageable. Do they have the potential to address the problem?"

Photo: Eve Krakow

"As teachers, we've always done this: we see a problem, so we look at ways to solve it."

Tarrant remembered that when she herself moved from journaling to crafted writing as an adult, she was forced to do it. So her action plan was to design three writing activities to push children to draw on their journal writing. In each case, she would model the appropriate strategies and provide support until the students were able to do the task on their own.

Her three writing activities were as follows:

- Students kept a Christmas journal. Then, back in class, they crafted a report on their holiday based on selections from their journal.
- Students did a journal free-write on their memories of the ice storm. They used the free-write to craft a poem.
- Students reread their entire journal viewing the contents as beads for a crafted text. They crafted a found poem from the rich words and images uncovered in their journals. (Crafting a "found poem" is like making a poem with a magnetic word kit on the fridge, she explained, but here the words and phrases came from the students' journals).

3. What information will I gather and how will I gather it?

This is your research plan. What information needs to be gathered to show whether your actions are working? Tarrant needed information that would enable her to answer the following two questions: Are students able to understand the potential of journal writing as a means of improving crafted writing? What support do students need in order to use their journals as a writing tool?

To determine how to collect your data, think of methods you have used before to gather information about your students, your teaching or your classroom. "It shouldn't be something you add on—we're too busy for that—but rather, something you already do," Tarrant emphasized.

4. How will I verify that my judgments are trustworthy and credible?

"Use multiple perspectives and methods to verify what you are seeing," she said. Her data included a professional journal, classroom records, student work, student reflections, student surveys, tape-recorded interviews with two children, and one case study.

5. How will I interpret the data?

"Look for patterns that repeat themselves," Tarrant advised. What do common sense and intuition tell you? Validate your claims with a group of critical friends. It's also important to determine what's still missing. For example, when Tarrant realized she didn't have all the data she needed from the journals alone, she went back and designed a student survey.

Tarrant's interpretation of her data led her to make three claims.

Claim #1: ***Structured opportunities to use journal entries as a prewriting tool help students understand how journal writing can be used to improve crafted writing.*** Excerpt from a student journal: "If I continue writing I can look back in my journal and take some ideas to put them into a new idea and that idea can become another idea going on for ever."

Claim #2: ***Modelling, by teachers, peers or experts, helps students produce crafted pieces of writing based on journal entries.*** One student wrote: "I got ideas from my teacher by her doing the assignment in front of the class. She did the same things we had to do and that helped us."

Claim #3: ***Dialogue between students and teachers as fellow writers during the crafting process helps students write effectively.*** "Sometimes my classmates read out loud and gave me ideas and good describing words to use," said another student.

Once again, Tarrant stressed the importance of consulting a critical friend. "I worked with other teachers to find meaningful evidence in my pile of data," she said.

6. How will I portray what I have learned and make it public?

"Part of the action research process is sharing what you've learned," Tarrant explained. This can take many forms, from talking to your colleagues at a cycle or staff meeting to presenting your work at a conference. Findings can be portrayed in various ways: through stories, oral or dramatic presentations, artistic rendering or formal write-ups. If you show samples of student work, make sure you have permission to do so.

Types of Action Research

While in this example Tarrant worked on her own, an action research project can be carried out by a small group of teachers, a cycle team or an entire school. In her case she carried out the project over three months, but there is no ideal time frame. But because of the nature of action research, you're not interrupting your regular teaching, and you're applying what you learn as you go.

For Tarrant, action research has become a way of life. Each year, she has a new project going. "Once you start action research, you'll never do anything else!"

Resources

Barbara Tarrant suggests the following two books for educators interested in action research:

Living the Questions, by R.S. Hubbard and B.M. Power (York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 1999)

The Art of Classroom Inquiry, by R.S. Hubbard and B.M. Power (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993)

By Eve Krakow

Lépine works in research and analysis at the MEQ–Services à la communauté anglophone. Previously, he worked in measurement and evaluation in vocational education and has taken courses in qualitative analysis. But he began his presentation by referring to his training as a historian.

"My specialty was the war of 1812. Everyone is dead. I cannot have an impact on them," he said jokingly. Similarly, in sociology, a researcher tries to avoid contact with the population under study so as not to influence them. "But in action research, you want people to change, you want to influence them."

There are many definitions for action research, but Lépine likes one provided by Emily Calhoun, a U.S. education consultant who gave workshops on action research at the 2003 IDC Symposium: "Action research is a fancy way of saying: let's study what's happening at our school and decide how to make it a better place."

There are several types of action research, he noted. Teacher research is carried out by one teacher in one class. Collaborative research is carried out by several teachers in several classes. Schoolwide research is aimed at school improvement and involves students, teachers and the administration. It all depends on what you are trying to achieve.

Collecting data

In action research, "you try something, and then you monitor it and collect data," said Lépine. He identified three types of data: hard, soft and qualitative data.

Hard data involves numbers, statistics, school results—such as how many Secondary IV students pass History 414 in a given year. Soft data involves opinions, but it is information you can tabulate. For example, you might ask students to rate their comfort level in class, or what strategies they use when reading a text. "This information helps you understand your students," he explained.

Qualitative data is obtained from analysis of a speech or text, such as parent interviews or focus groups. Using qualitative analysis techniques, such as those of Miles and Huberman, "you look for patterns, recurrent or discordant events."

Essential questions

Lépine proposed five questions to consider before undertaking action research.

1. *Why are you doing action research?* What is the current situation, and what is it you want to achieve?

2. *What type of support do you have?* Do you have the support of other teachers or your principal? Will you get help from a university resource person? Is there someone in your school who will be able to understand your numbers or is familiar with qualitative analysis?

3. *What type of data will you gather?* How will you determine whether you've achieved your goal? "One frequent pitfall is that we collect huge piles of data, but we cannot make sense of it," said Lépine.

4. *Who is the audience for your research?* Will it stay among your immediate colleagues, or will it be shared with the wider community? This will influence to what extent your methodology is formal or informal.

5. *What are the expected side effects?* Will it get the whole school involved? Parents? Might it be a source of motivation for students or teachers?

Action research process

Once you have explored the questions above, you can begin the action research process. Lépine gave a brief overview of its components.

Current information and goal: What do you know about your students already? What is the purpose of your research? Describe the student performances and responses you would like to see. You might include benchmarks as progress indicators.

External information: What has been tried in other schools? Look at research studies, articles and books that related to your focus area or that provide general information about learners.

Experimentation and data collection. Try something new and monitor the situation. Collect hard, soft and qualitative data. Use multiple sources and collect data regularly.

Analysis and interpretation. Are you achieving the desired effects? Why or why not? Determine priority areas for action; decide what can be celebrated.

Taking action. Combine the information from your data analysis with the information from your study of professional literature. Craft short and long-term action plans.

"It's not a linear process," noted Lépine. "It's a spiral. You're always in action and doing research."

By Gisèle Poirier

Helping Students in Difficulty to Succeed

In the Montréal region, the "Opening All the Doors to Success" strategy has been stimulating reflection and helping everyone involved to understand and implement the changes prescribed by the reform.

From the onset, the Groupe coopératif d'implantation de la réforme, set up by the directors general of the Montréal school boards, has welcomed the proposal to implement this strategy in the the Montréal region. "Opening All the Doors to Success" focuses on helping students who have difficulty at school. While continuing the work already under way in schools and school boards, the group would like to involve everyone in this shared reflection process, in order to bring the desired changes to teaching, learning, organizational and management practices.

To this end, the group set up a committee including representatives of the various local discussion tables as well as professionals from the regional office who participate in these committees. Its first mandate was to develop an action plan. The general orientation emphasizes the need to take concrete steps to develop a shared vision among teachers, managers and other school and school board professionals, so that practices are complementary, cohesive and centred on the school's mission.

Regional dialogue and collaboration

Various actions are now taking place on the regional level. For example, work is under way to ensure that the needs of students with learning difficulties are taken into account when developing educational projects and success plans for schools.

This year, two major projects are planned: one regional day of meetings for educators and school personnel, and another for managers. Aiming to provide an opportunity for reflection and exchange, these activities will complement the steps being taken in each of the school boards.

The first activity will bring together teachers, special education teachers and complementary educational service personnel from the youth and adult sectors to discuss their practices. Participants will have the chance to share their vision of success, and the impact of this vision on their practices, with school board managers. Participants will then explore ways to share their expertise and seek coherence in their actions to better support students and teachers.

In the second activity, the directors and assistant directors of the school boards will be invited to discuss the management challenges resulting from the reform. This activity is intended for managers from all school boards, whether they play pedagogical or administrative roles. They will examine real-life situations to explore concrete solutions and identify the inherent management challenges.

The purpose of these two days is to give the participants in this process an opportunity to become aware of their roles, to reflect on their actions and to bring their expertise to the shared project of ensuring student success. In short, to take one more step forward by joining teachers and parents in creating a true learning community around students—especially those having difficulty at school.

While continuing the work already under way in schools and school boards, the group would like to involve everyone in this shared reflection process, in order to bring the desired changes to teaching, learning, organizational and management practices.

By Aline Buron

A Guide in Progress

A committee is currently working on a handbook and other tools to foster reflection on how to renew evaluation standards and procedures in schools and school boards. This document will be available in September 2005.

Why do we need evaluation standards and procedures?

According to section 96.15 of the *Education Act*, "the principal is responsible for approving, on the proposal of the teachers ... the standards and procedures for the evaluation of student achievement."

Changes to the *Education Act* and the *Basic School Regulation* as well as the implementation of the Québec Education Program, the *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* and the *Policy on Special Education*, the various frames of reference in evaluation and the competency levels all call for a new way of evaluating learning that affects the responsibilities and the practices of everyone who works in this field.

Schools and school boards are therefore invited to renew their local frameworks for the evaluation of learning, in particular by establishing their own standards and procedures, which are essential for setting up evaluation practices in keeping with the vision of learning and evaluation underlying the education reform.

Where are schools and school boards in the process?

Some schools and school boards have already begun the process, while others are about to do so. Several questions have already been raised over who is responsible for developing evaluation standards and procedures.

- What should evaluation standards and procedures look like in the context of the reform?
- What is the purpose of these evaluation standards and procedures?
- How does a school team go about establishing them?
- What are the roles of teachers and school principals?
- Can the school board play a role?
- What guidelines can a school team use to develop evaluation standards and procedures?
- Are there any tools available to facilitate this process?
- What references are available?
- Etc.

A few answers

The *Implementation Plan for the Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* states that "the Ministère will offer schools and school boards support in developing their own evaluation standards and procedures. For this purpose, it will make tools available to institutions and school boards that request them."

A work group composed of educational resource people and directors from across the Québec school network has been working for the past few months to develop these tools and an accompanying user's guide.

Questions and examples of standards and procedures proposed in these tools will suggest specific elements to consider and avenues to explore to ensure that evaluation practices are in keeping with the QEP.

What approach should be used to develop evaluation standards and procedures?

The working group proposes that standards and procedures be developed in a spirit of collaboration between the school board and the schools, chiefly in the interest of efficiency, but also to harmonize the school board's choices in matters of evaluation and those of the school. Adopting a concerted approach contributes to the development of a common vision of the evaluation of learning within the school community. It could lead to a reflection on the renewal of evaluation practices, beginning with the various people who work in the school community: heads of educational services, education consultants, elementary and secondary school principals and teachers, etc. Then, the results of this reflection could be used as a springboard for schools to undertake their own process for developing standards and procedures. However, implementation of a concerted approach must allow schools to retain all the desired latitude, in keeping with the spirit of the *Education Act*, to develop their own evaluation standards and procedures.

In addition, according to the working group, the development of evaluation standards and procedures should be seen by the school team as an additional means for understanding and applying the changes ensuing from the reform. It is a way for the school to develop its collective competency in taking on this responsibility, in particular by giving teachers a leading role. To this end, the first step toward developing evaluation standards and procedures should be for participants to familiarize themselves with the main frameworks available, that is, the *Education Act*, the QEP, the *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning*, the *Basic School Regulation*, etc. Indeed, the need for schools and the school board to find a common vision of the evaluation of learning demands an integrative reading of all the elements guiding learning and evaluation under the reform. The second step consists in carrying out a reflection that will enable participants to take stock of current evaluation practices and identify desired changes.

It will of course be easier to carry out this reflection once schools and school boards have instruments to assist them in this process. The working group is currently preparing several different tools that seek to generate reflection in schools and school boards on how to renew evaluation practices. Questions and examples of standards and procedures proposed in these tools will suggest specific elements to consider and avenues to explore to ensure that evaluation practices are in keeping with the QEP. The tools are designed for use by all schools and school boards, regardless of what stage they are at in terms of developing evaluation standards and procedures or what method they have chosen to use.

This reflection on the evaluation of learning, beginning with very specific questions, is a necessity for ensuring that across Québec, the renewal of local frameworks highlights the new challenges raised by evaluation as support for learning and the recognition of competencies.

Example from the tools

This example is designed to assist in the reflection process on establishing standards and procedures for classroom evaluation at the planning stage, more specifically with respect to responsibility. The tool as a whole identifies all categories, elements and aspects to consider in developing standards and procedures, as exhaustively as possible. The reference document is accompanied by a record-keeping tool that can be used to describe the standards and procedures established by the school. (Please note that the excerpt below is a preliminary translation from the French.)

This reflection on the evaluation of learning, beginning with very specific questions, is a necessity for ensuring that, across Québec, the renewal of local frameworks highlights the new challenges raised by evaluation as support for learning and the recognition of competencies.

When will these tools be available?

Aware of the needs expressed by schools and school boards, the working group aims to have the handbook and other instruments for renewing local frameworks available in September 2005.

Classroom evaluation (reference document)

Elements and main aspects	**Questions to help the school board or school committee**	**Suggestions for evaluation standards**	**Questions to help the school establish its evaluation procedures**	**Examples of procedures**
Planning				
Planning responsibilities	Who is responsible for planning evaluation? What is the role of the cycle team in planning evaluation? What is the role of the teacher?	Evaluation planning is a shared responsibility between the cycle team and the teacher, in accordance with the legal framework.	How should responsibilities be shared between the cycle team and the teacher? When it comes to evaluation, how can we ensure coherence and continuity between the two years in the cycle?	The cycle team holds a meeting at the beginning of each term to determine common evaluation procedures (types of tasks, types of instruments, means of communicating with parents, etc.) The cycle team plans at least two common learning and evaluation situations in addition to those planned by each teacher.

Interviews by Pascale Sauvé

A New Tool to Discover

For the past several months, the committee on evaluation standards and procedures has been meeting regularly to put together a tool for renewing local frameworks for the evaluation of learning. What is the importance of this tool? What is its purpose? Here is what some committee members said.

Jeannine Bérubé, *director of educational services, Commission scolaire des Phares*

"Collaboration between the school board and the schools is crucial. A school board has the responsibility to support its schools so that they can meet their obligations. It should also make sure that the policies and reference frameworks are implemented. In this case, we're talking about a very important policy, because it concerns evaluation. We have to make sure that the evaluation procedures correspond to the ministerial frameworks as well as the reality in schools. The need for concerted action between the school board and schools is therefore based on the need to establish a common process of reflective thinking and a common vision. Then, from this process, each school will define its evaluation procedures.

"This tool asks all the necessary questions, taking into account all the ministerial frameworks, to carry out this process on a local level. It is an integrative tool. It focuses on evaluation, but I'm sure it will lead to the examination of many other areas as well, such as students with learning difficulties or complementary educational services. I think schools and school boards will find it very useful."

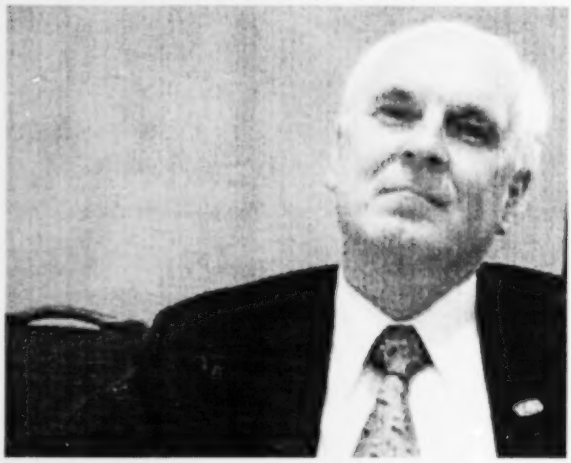
Lise Morin, *education consultant specializing in measurement and evaluation, Commission scolaire de Laval*

"What I find interesting in the work we're doing is to see how prevalent the issue of evaluation is in all the official education documents. It makes you realize that you need to make connections between the QEP, with its new approach to evaluation, and the various ministerial frameworks. It's important to have an overall picture—one that includes classroom evaluation, individual student progress, promotion from one cycle to another, the transition from elementary to secondary school and, at the end of the process, certification. The big picture helps make the process coherent.

Currently, in schools, we tend to work by units. We often look at one question at a time, in sub-committees. Now we're advocating a more a global approach that will enable schools to make connections between these different committees and come up with a unified vision. That's what we're trying to do with this tool: provide an overview of practices."

Guy Bouchard, *coordinator of instructional services for secondary school at the Fédération des établissements d'enseignement privé*

"Many schools in the private sector had developed local policies for the evaluation of learning. However, in the context of the reform, these policies cannot stay as they are, because they do not comply with the new programs of study and the *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning*. Therefore, we need to help each school review its evaluation practices. This tool will help schools ask themselves the right questions and define new practices. I'm thinking in particular of everything surrounding the role of the teacher, exercising professional judgment, and the work of the cycle team. A tool like this will help generate reflection on these questions. It will no doubt be a learning experience for all schools."



Mona Ouellet, *education consultant, Commission scolaire Val-des-Cerfs*

"This tool will help schools to determine which elements to consider in their school and to specify their orientations for evaluation. At the same time, it will ensure a certain degree of consistency and coherence in practices, within the school board and within each school. Teachers will have guidelines on which to base their decisions. Of course, there will still be room for adaptation. The tool is not a technique or model to be applied. It is a guide for coming up with a shared vision.

"Working with this tool will also help teachers become more familiar with the evaluation policy and framework. As a result, teachers will be better equipped to justify their procedures and choices when speaking to parents. For parents, this concerted approach is appealing, because it means they'll encounter more or less the same guidelines and practices from year to year. This will make it easier for them to follow their child's progress."

By Christian Rousseau

Evaluation Geared to Competencies

Teams are currently developing competency levels for all subjects in Secondary Cycle One.

Of the many projects under way at the ministerial level relating to the reform of the secondary school curriculum, several concern the evaluation of learning. Whether it's revising certain sections of the *Basic School Regulation*, writing support documents or preparing new evaluation situations, no effort is spared at the Direction de l'évaluation to support the school community in applying the Québec Education Program as of September 2005. One of the projects generating the most interest and questions is no doubt the development of competency levels, now in progress for Secondary Cycle One. This article provides an overview of the work being done and the impact this work will have on the changes under way.

The development of competency levels for secondary school continues the process started at the elementary school level, and stems from the application of the principles of the new *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning*. However, the realities of secondary school raise specific issues, given the weight of decisions based on end-of-cycle evaluations.

On the one hand, for students, much depends on the mechanisms for certification of studies: access to higher education or to the job market. The information parents receive is coloured by the prospect of certification, and this information must be clear.

On the other hand, the choice of learning paths makes it even more important to have a statement of competencies that can provide a student profile based on the competencies he or she has developed. In this context, the report at the end of Secondary Cycle One conveys information that plays a key role in guiding students' choices. It is in this spirit that the project was designed: by providing common references aligned with the QEP, the competency levels will serve as guidelines for end-of-cycle evaluation.

Pilot project

To ensure a solid foundation for the competency levels, the competency level development teams worked with researchers Jean-Guy Blais, Jean-Pierre Lalande and Michel Laurier from LABRIPROF at the Université de Montréal and tried an approach based on the experiential knowledge of the teaching community in each subject. We sought consensus around what can be observed at the different stages of development of a competency. A pilot project was carried out in 2003-2004 to develop a method and produce competency level prototypes for two competencies:

- in French, language of instruction: *Écrire des textes variés*
- in Music: *Performs musical works*

For a homogenous presentation of the competency levels from one subject to another, we chose to present the competency in five levels, where Level 3 is the passing level. The descriptions of the levels are presented in paragraphs structured in the same way as in the QEP so that users can easily situate what a student can do with respect to a particular competency.

The development of these prototypes required the expertise of two committees of seven teachers and the opinions submitted by a larger number of teachers of Music and French, language of instruction. It should be noted that this process involved professionals from the entire education community: French-speaking and English-speaking teachers and education consultants from the public and private sectors, as well as university specialists, who assisted in validating the competency levels for each subject.

The realities of secondary school raise specific issues, given the weight of decisions based on end-of-cycle evaluations.

Competency levels for all subjects

Based on the process developed during the pilot project and the competency level descriptions obtained, the project has been extended this year to all subjects in the QEP for Secondary Cycle One. That is the challenge now faced by the competency level development teams, who met in Longueuil on September 27 and 28, 2004, to begin this work. The meeting, attended by nearly 200 people, allowed participants to structure the work ahead and highlighted their enthusiasm and commitment.

The goal for this year is to develop one set of competency levels per subject. These will be published next fall, to enable teachers to become familiar with this new evaluation tool and to get feedback from schools and school boards. A consolidated document containing all competency levels for Secondary Cycle One will be published when the work is finished, in fall 2006.

In addition, the prototype competency levels developed under the pilot project will be tried out by French and Music teachers, which will enable us to improve the organization of information and highlight the connections between the competency levels and the QEP. The results of these reflections will also be used to clarify the explanatory texts that will accompany the competency levels. An analysis of the process has confirmed the need to base this work on the experiential knowledge of teachers to make sure the competency levels are used from the very first years that the reform is applied. These tools will help give teachers' professional judgment the merit it deserves in evaluation, putting into practice one of the underlying directives of the *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning*.

Secondary Cycle One, Level 3

Music: Performs musical works

Plays according to the key signature and dynamics indicated in the score. Breathes so as to produce steady sounds at the correct pitch and for the appropriate duration. Contributes to the group performance by linking musical phrases together, entering correctly after several bars of rests and keeping a steady beat throughout the piece. Decodes the principal characteristics of the piece such as rhythmic sequences, articulation signs, similarities and differences between passages. Seeks to improve his/her performance by asking questions and using free time to practice his/her instrument. Points out improvements in his/her performance. Uses music vocabulary appropriate to the performance situation.

This is the description of the level of competency considered acceptable at the end of Secondary Cycle One (end of second year). As you can see, it is not an exhaustive list, but rather a profile of what is typical of a student who has reached this level.

Publication of competency levels

Fall 2005	**Fall 2006**
One competency in each subject	All competencies in all subjects

These tools will help give teachers' professional judgment the merit it deserves in evaluation.

Interviews by Pascale Sauvé

Reaching a New Level

Last year, a group of teachers developed the competency levels for Secondary Cycle One, in French and Music. They created prototypes that will serve as references for competency level development teams in all subjects, who began their work this year. In light of the work they've carried out, how do they perceive competency levels? What have they learned? What will they remember most? Here's what they said.

Serge Lafontaine, ***Music teacher at École Paul-Arsenault, Commission scolaire des Affluents***

In working on the competency levels, I became more aware of my role and of the student's role. As teachers, our ultimate goal is to prepare students for the future. This means, as stated in the QEP, making sure the students are able to solve their problems, interact with others and realize their full potential. They have to be aware of who they are and what they are capable of accomplishing. The competency levels show what the student can do. There will be discussions with each of the students to help them become aware of where they're at, their strengths and weaknesses, tools that can help them move forward and what they can improve. It's a positivist approach."

Luc Lévesque, ***Music teacher at École secondaire de Chambly, Commission scolaire des Patriotes***

"With the competency level indicators, I think it will be easier to follow and report on students' progress. Because in art, that's often a problem: how to communicate this information to students and parents. Some people think our evaluations are purely arbitrary. So if we work with competency level indicators, there's no room for arbitrary judgments, because they're concrete and well defined. This is something both the student and the parent will be able to understand. But it's also a tool for the teacher. I've noticed that sometimes we idealize a student. The indicators remind us that there's a path students have to follow to develop their competencies, and that we shouldn't skip any of the steps."

Nathalie Lachance, *Music teacher at École secondaire du Grand-Coteau, Commission scolaire des Patriotes*

"The indicators in the competency levels will enable us to paint a better picture of the student's progress. They are much more eloquent, clear and precise than percentage marks. This system will mean more to the student, the teacher and the parents, because it gives us a better idea of where the student is in relation to the expectations of the QEP and the type of guidance the student needs to further develop his or her competencies."

Guy Limoges, *Music teacher at École Léopol-Gravel, Commission scolaire des Affluents*

"The competency levels help students conduct a self-evaluation and become aware of what they have to do to succeed. If they succeed, they'll enjoy what they're doing even more, they'll want to invest more of themselves, and they'll be proud of themselves. This is how we have to support young people, so that they learn to recognize their qualities and strengths. Because they have to draw on those qualities and strengths to progress. It's positive reinforcement. As teachers, we're there as references, guides, resources to help students move forward. Our role is changing, for the better!"

IDC SYMPOSIUM AND QESN-RECIT WORKSHOPS

The Implementation Design Committee (IDC) will hold its annual learning symposium on February 14 and 15 in Laval under the theme, *Collegiality and Collaboration: Keys to Successful Implementation!* The symposium will focus on supporting instructional strategies, assisting the teacher in the classroom and the organization of school structures to facilitate the QEP.

On February 16, also in Laval, the Quebec English Schools Network RÉCIT will hold a full day of sessions from the QESN-RECIT workshop series.

To find out about these and other professional development events, visit the IDC's School Reform Web site at <**www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/reform**>.

INTEGRATING THE CULTURAL DIMENSION INTO SCHOOL

Reference Document for Teachers

Integrating the Cultural Dimension into School is a reference document stemming from the Educational Policy Statement *Québec Schools on Course* (1997), which recommended that the cultural content of the curriculum be improved. It is also consistent with the orientations of the Québec Education Program. The document begins by clarifying some concepts that are often used in speaking of culture and education, and places these concepts in relation to each other. It then presents various ways to improve the cultural content of the curriculum on the basis of three avenues for integrating the cultural dimension: teaching and learning, the QEP and collaboration with the school's cultural partners.

A PDF version of *Integrating the Cultural Dimension into School* is available on the MEQ Web site: <**http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/projets/culture/integrationculture.htm**>.

WHAT YOU SAID

By Marie-Hélène Giguère

Schoolscapes and *Virage* have helped at least 60 per cent of you understand an aspect of the reform.

That's what we learned from a survey of 2 800 teachers last April. Conducted by the Service de la recherche of the MEQ's Direction de la recherche, the survey had three main objectives: to make sure you were in fact receiving *Schoolscapes* or *Virage*, to find out whether you felt such a publication was useful, and to determine how this magazine could continue to help schools and school boards advance along the path of the reform.

According to the survey results, 99.4 per cent of respondents confirmed they do receive *Schoolscapes* or *Virage* at their school, in sufficient quantities. As well, 70 per cent of respondents stated that it is useful for the MEQ to publish an information magazine to support the implementation of the reform in Québec schools.

This survey also enabled us to discover your concerns and areas of interest. In the open-ended section of the questionnaire, we learned that you would like *Schoolscapes* and *Virage* to present more ideas, resources and activities for implementing the reform, particularly with respect to evaluation and evaluation tools (portfolio, observation checklists for elementary school and the cross-curricular competencies, etc.). Finally, how to apply the reform when working with students with learning difficulties and alternatives to grade repetition were two of the many subjects you would like us to focus on in *Schoolscapes* and *Virage*.

Happy Holidays!

Photo: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec 2002-2004

NEW ON THE SCHOOL REFORM WEB SITE

The Implementation Design Committee (IDC) is continually updating its Web site, School Reform in Quebec. Here's a sample of what's new:

- **Evaluation: Teaching to a Better Test.** Challenged with the need to help Grade 10 students better prepare themselves for the History of Quebec and Canada (History 414) exam, teachers Ralph Mason (now V.P. at D'Arcy McGee), Jeralyne Manweiler and Steve Altenberg, from Philemon Wright High School at the Western Québec School Board, took action.
- **Parent Zone: "What the Reform is All About"** is an interactive Web site that uses cartoons, text and sound to explain to parents what the reform is all about.
- **Best Practices: Focus on Fitness.** In spring 2003, the QESN-RÉCIT team visited Ormstown Elementary School to document its school-wide, year-long project "The Funtastic Circus." The team met with principal Gail Atkinson and several teachers, who talked about their experience in implementing cycle-based instruction and working with the QEP.

To find out more, go to: <**www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/reform**>

THROUGH YOUNG EYES

At the November provincial meeting on the education reform, in a video presentation, 15 young people aged 11 to 24 shared their views on school, their interests, their doubts and their professional ambitions. Each of these students has followed a different path, yet they all aspire to the same goal: to realize their dreams, to find the path that is right for them and to succeed.

The 28-minute video can be viewed in French at <**www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/virage**>

SCHOOLSCAPES

WORKING TOGETHER TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS

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